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I took cash to Geneva in pouch, major says

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The establishment of a secret Swiss bank account used by U.S. spies to bankroll politically volatile covert operations during the Vietnam War was hardly the stuff of a James Bond novel, according to testimony Friday in the embezzlement trial of retired Air Force Gen. Richard B. Collins.

James O. Richards, a retired Air Force major, described the far more mundane procedure this way:

"I physically transferred funds from the Air Force in the Pentagon to Geneva, walked into the bank and said I want to open an account," Richards said. "The funds were examined ... and the account was opened in my name."

That 1965 transaction created an account that was ultimately used, according to statements in court this week, by Lockheed Aircraft Corp. executives to bribe foreign officials on behalf of the United States.

The fund stayed secret until Collins, once one of the highest ranking U.S. officers in Europe, was indicted nearly 20 years later on charges of skimming some \$19,000 in interest from the account. Collins, 55, of Fort Lauderdale,

insists he handled the accounts under super-secret orders from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Details of the fund are trickling out of the trial, which completed its fifth day Friday and is expected to continue at least through Tuesday.

Dressed in a business suit and carrying two passports, Richards took to Switzerland between \$150,000 and \$300,000 in "green cash" hidden in classified pouches in an attache case. The pouches were used to conceal the cash from U.S. Customs, Richards said.

Richards, the first custodian of the account, said the creation of the account "was directly related to the Lockheed contract."

A Lockheed executive, A. Gene Otsea, had the power of attorney over the account. Collins' defense attorney has said the account was used to bribe unidentified foreign countries to allow American military aircraft to launch spy missions from their lands.

U.S. Justice Department prosecutors don't deny the existence or the purpose of the account. But they believe Collins surreptitiously juggled money between the account and several others in order to skim some of the cash for himself.